

Inclusive Mentoring: Diverse Students

Lewis-Clark State College

The Graduate School's *Faculty Mentoring Guide* suggests that mentors must work to "Understand the diverse factors that influence students' mentoring needs." These factors include, but are not limited to gender, sexual orientation and gender identity, race and ethnicity, age, disabilities, family responsibilities, being from another country, and socioeconomic status.

1. Handelsman et al. (2005) report that "Many mentors find it challenging to work with students whose personalities differ from their own. Some find cultural differences awkward; some wonder whether their students experience a different lab environment from the one they experience. Some have never thought about any of these issues."
2. According to DeCosmo and Harris (2006), "**empathy** has been identified as a key skill in effective intercultural communication."
3. Cornett-DeVito and Reeves (1999) suggest that advisors should illustrate "behavior flexibility" toward students from different cultures. For example, be prepared to discuss varying attitudes toward such topics as timeliness and schedules or dress codes.
4. DeCosmo and Harris (2006) suggest that in order to establish a competent advisor-advisee role and build rapport, "advisors need to expand their knowledge of other cultural groups".
5. Help minority undergraduate research students to search out and apply for funding that specifically targets underrepresented groups in undergraduate research.
6. Provide personal support that may relate to the unique demands of family or personal life on minority students.
7. Make time to listen.